

THEATRE November 11, 2013

Review: More Light

by **Andrew D. Butterfield**

“A quiet descent into hell”

More Light tells the story of the Emperor's women who follow him into his tomb and are locked inside. Narrated by the Emperor's one-time favourite (*More Light*), it chronicles madness, despair and the women's desperation to create something that will last beyond themselves.

It was chilling how the actors managed to take the audience with them on their journey, making us complicit and even almost agreeing with the first act of cannibalism, the necessity of the act is punched out powerfully when all that is said is: “How is it to be done?”. Once we cross that boundary with them we are able to sympathise with every other boundary crossed and every consequence.

I found *More Light* to be a powerful and disturbing performance that combined animation and physical theatre with traditional acting to good effect. Their set was vibrant and the use of flickering candlelight drew out the solemn and eerie nature of the tomb. The subtlety of their use of Chinese influence meant that there was no jar between the setting and the western actors and western references – a very wise choice.

Akaina Ghosh was excellent in the part of *More Light* herself; her repressed intensity in delivery and her ability to withdraw into herself, yet still be the main focus of the stage was impressive. Tyler Anderson was also deserving of mention and while I would have liked to see more violence and physicality in his portrayal of the convict, his range of portrayal from menacing to tenderness added a wonderful touch of humanity in what seemed to be a world of darkness. Overall the acting was good and never broke from believability.

The directing, by Michael Laird, was simple yet effective – as the show went on each girl becomes subtly twisted, each in their own way, and this insidious invasion of their madness is highlighted all the more for being couched in their habits of modesty, courtesy and etiquette. The use of movement was well executed and added depth to the storytelling. The major criticism I could make would be to say that the ending felt a little abrupt, with no transition for the time lapse – another movement sequence could have perhaps softened this – however it was clear that the director

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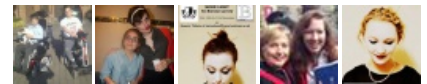
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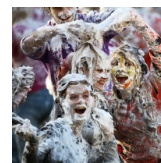
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wanted to brutally squash that last surge of hope and he did this well.

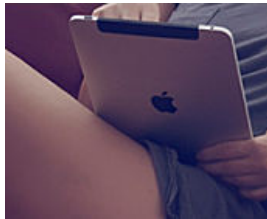
There were a few technical faults, perhaps inevitable on the first night, such as part of the projection being blocked by the hanging fabric and the cast having to keep adjusting the side curtain during the action, which was quite distracting. However I have no doubt that these very simple errors will be fixed by the next performance.

I would definitely recommend this show to a friend as I greatly enjoyed the journey that it took and the concepts explored. It is guaranteed to make you uncomfortable at least once as it broaches so many difficult topics, but I believe that that is the purpose of good theatre. I left the show unable to stop thinking about it – in a good way.

Image courtesy of Edith Reid

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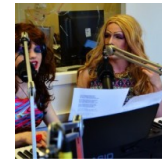
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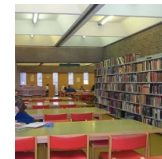
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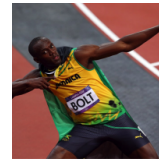
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